

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

for the
Eastern District of Missouri

In the Matter of the Search of)
 the Priority Mail Express parcel bearing tracking number EJ 344)
 654 407 US, addressed to: "Tia Cole 5955 Goodfellow BLVD)
 Apt B St. Louis MO 63147" with a return address of "3535 W)
 Tierra Buena LN Phx AZ 85035."

Case No. 4:21 MJ 82 DDN

) SUBMITTED TO THE COURT AND
) SIGNED BY RELIABLE ELECTRONIC MEANS

APPLICATION FOR A SEARCH WARRANT

I, Nicholas Masterson, a federal law enforcement officer or an attorney for the government request a search warrant and state under penalty of perjury that I have reason to believe that on the following property:

the Priority Mail Express parcel bearing tracking number EJ 344 654 407 US, addressed to: "Tia Cole 5955 Goodfellow BLVD Apt B St. Louis MO 63147" with a return address of "3535 W Tierra Buena LN Phx AZ 85035."

located in the EASTERN District of MISSOURI, there is now concealed

controlled substances and/or United States currency.

The basis for the search under Fed. R. Crim. P. 41(c) is (check one or more):

- ☒ evidence of a crime;
- ☒ contraband, fruits of crime, or other items illegally possessed;
- ☒ property designed for use, intended for use, or used in committing a crime;
- ☐ a person to be arrested or a person who is unlawfully restrained.

The search is related to a violation of:

<i>Code Section</i>	<i>Offense Description</i>
Title 21, U.S.C., §§ 841(a)(1), 846	possess with intent to distribute controlled substance(s)
Title 18, U.S.C., 1952, 1956, 1957	money laundering

The application is based on these facts:

SEE ATTACHED AFFIDAVIT WHICH IS INCORPORATED HEREIN BY REFERENCE.

- ☒ Continued on the attached sheet.
- ☐ Delayed notice of _____ days (give exact ending date if more than 30 days: _____) is requested under 18 U.S.C. § 3103a, the basis of which is set forth on the attached sheet.

I state under the penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.


 NICHOLAS MASTERSON, Task Force Officer
 United States Postal Inspection Service

Printed name and title

Sworn to, attested to, and affirmed before me via reliable electronic means pursuant to Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 4.1 and 41.

Date: February 26, 2021

/s/ David D. Noce

Judge's signature

City and State: St. Louis, MO

David D. Noce, U.S. Magistrate Judge

Printed name and title

AUSA: JOHN MANTOVANI

AFFIDAVIT

I, Nicholas J. Masterson, being duly sworn by reliable electronic means, state the following:

1. I am a Task Force Officer (TFO) with the United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS). I have been assigned as a Task Force Officer with USPIS for approximately three months. I have been assigned to the Contraband Interdiction and Investigation (CI2) Team. I have completed available training by the USPIS in the investigation of controlled substances or proceeds/payments being transported through the United States. The St. Louis Field Office's CI2 Team has intercepted numerous parcels which were found to contain narcotics or proceeds of narcotics trafficking and other criminal activity. Prior to my assignment with the USPIS, I have accrued approximately nine (9) years of law enforcement experience. During my career, I have conducted numerous narcotics investigations as a Narcotics Detective with the St. Charles County Regional Drug Task Force. A position in which I have approximately one and a half years of experience. While assigned as a Detective, I received extensive training in narcotics investigations and money laundering investigations.

2. Experience and drug trafficking intelligence information gathered by the USPIS have demonstrated that the U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail are frequently utilized by drug traffickers for shipping controlled substances or proceeds/payments. Use of Express Mail and Priority Mail are favored because of the speed (Express Mail - overnight; Priority mail - two day delivery), reliability, free telephone and internet package tracking service, as well as the perceived minimal chance of detection. Express Mail was originally intended for urgent, business-to-business, correspondence. Intelligence from prior packages, which were found to contain controlled substances or proceeds/payments, has indicated that these labels are usually from an individual to an individual. Express Mail and Priority Mail are seldom used for individual to individual correspondence.

3. Information gathered by the USPIS has also demonstrated that other delivery couriers, such as Federal Express and United Parcel Service, are frequently utilized by drug traffickers for shipping controlled substances or proceeds/payments. Information gathered by the USPIS has demonstrated that the services and delivery practices of Federal Express and United Parcel Service are similar to U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail. Like U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail, Federal Express and United Parcel Service are favored because of the speed, reliability, free telephone and internet package tracking service, as well as the perceived minimal chance of detection. Like U.S. Postal Service Express Mail and Priority Mail, Federal Express and United Parcel Service were originally intended for urgent, business-to-business, correspondence. However, intelligence from prior packages which were found to contain controlled substances or proceeds/payments, has indicated that these shipping labels are usually from an individual to an individual. Federal Express and United Parcel Service are seldom utilized to convey individual-to-individual correspondence.

4. In an effort to combat the flow of controlled substances through the overnight or two to three day delivery services, interdiction programs have been established in cities throughout the United States by the USPIS. These cities have been identified as known sources of, and destinations for, controlled substances. The USPIS conducted an analysis of prior packages mailed through overnight and/or two to three day delivery services that contained controlled substances or proceeds/payments of controlled substance sales. The analysis of those prior packages indicated that these labels are usually from an individual to an individual. In the few cases when overnight, and or two to three day delivery service packages containing controlled substances or proceeds/payments have displayed a business or company name, it has usually proven to be a fictitious business or company, or the business listed is not associated with the mailer and was randomly selected by the mailer to deter law enforcement detection. In such instances, Postal Inspectors review available business records to verify the postage payment utilized by the mailer.

5. Most business mailings sent via USPS or through other private couriers reflect a pre-established postage meter or other various lines of credit to pay for the postage. Additionally, during the Silk Road investigation (dark web investigation that provided avenues to customers to order narcotics via the internet) the USPIS learned that unknown persons posted intelligence on the Silk Road website warning would be drug mailers that most USPIS search warrant affidavits for narcotics/narcotics proceeds packages, reflect mailing labels written as person-to-person and bore fictitious addressee and sender names. Due to the posting on the Silk Road Website, USPIS has noticed an increased number of packages utilizing valid sender and addressee names and or valid business names on narcotics/narcotics proceeds packages. Recent analysis has also shown that whether the mailer utilized a legitimate name/business on a mailing label or a fictitious name on the mailing label, cash payment for postage is the method of payment for most narcotics/narcotics proceeds parcels. USPIS analysis has established a series of characteristics which, when found in combination of two or more, have shown a high probability that the package will contain a controlled substance or the proceeds of controlled substance sales. Information collected by the USPIS has demonstrated that the presence of these characteristics is significant for delivery services, to include U.S. Postal Service Express Mail, U.S. Postal Service Priority Mail, Federal Express, and United Parcel Service. This profile includes the following characteristics: package mailed from or addressed to a narcotic source city; package has a fictitious return address; package addressee name is unknown at the destination address; package sender name is unknown at the return address; package has address information which is handwritten; package is mailed from a Commercial Mail Receiving Agency (CMRA); package is addressed to residential areas; package is addressed from an individual to an individual; packages are wrapped in brown paper and/or heavily taped; and the ZIP Code from where the package is mailed is different than the

ZIP Code used in the return address, and or any other characteristic previously noted in this paragraph.

6. The U.S. Postal Inspection Service St. Louis Field Office's CI2 Team has found the characteristics listed in paragraphs three, four, and five, are indicative of packages, which have been found to contain illegal controlled substances or the proceeds/payments for controlled substances.

7. This affidavit is submitted for the limited purpose of establishing probable cause for the search warrant sought. I have not set forth each and every fact known to me concerning this investigation. I have included what I believe are facts sufficient for the present purpose. The information contained in this affidavit is based upon my personal knowledge and investigation, as well as information conveyed to me by other law enforcement agents and employees.

8. On Thursday, February 25, 2021, United States Postal Inspector Jordan Wicks was at the St. Louis Network Distribution Center (NDC) conducting a review of incoming Priority Mail Express parcels. During that review, Postal Inspector Wicks located Priority Mail Express Parcel **EJ 344 654 407 US** (hereafter known as "**Subject Parcel**"). The **Subject Parcel** was mailed on February 16, 2021 from Glendale, Arizona post office (zip code 85301).¹ Postal Inspector Wicks noted the **Subject Parcel** had a handwritten label was addressed person to a person, had postage fees of \$55.20, and was addressed from a known source narcotic area: Phoenix, Arizona. Also, the section of the label where a postal employee is supposed to fill in the section of the label during package intake was completely empty. The characteristics listed in this paragraph area consistent with characteristics of previous parcels that have contained narcotics. Due to the characteristics associated with the **Subject Parcel**, Inspector Wicks detained the parcel for further review.

9. On the same date, February 25, 2021, Postal Inspector Wicks notified me of the **Subject Parcel**, I retrieved the **Subject Parcel** from Postal Inspector Wicks, and due to the characteristics began reviewing USPS, law enforcement, and open source databases to verify the sender/addressee names and addresses written on the label mailing label

10. The **Subject Parcel** bore a handwritten label, was addressed from a source narcotics area: Glendale, Arizona (my training and experience has shown Glendale, Arizona to be a source area for narcotics), and was addressed person to a person. The **Subject Parcel** was address to: "Tia Cole 5955 Goodfellow BLVD Apt B St. Louis MO 63147" and address from: "3535 W Tierra Buena LN Phx AZ

¹ Although the **Subject Parcel** noted it was mailed from Phoenix, AZ area on February 16, 2021 and a nine day delay in delivery for Priority Mail Express Parcel seems excessive, there are recent and specific many factors that could have caused the delay of the arrival of **Subject Parcel** to St. Louis, Missouri. Those factors include but are not limited to, the COVID-19 pandemic coupled with the amount of parcels currently in the mail stream, the winter weather storm in the Midwest around the time the **Subject Parcel** was mailed, and/or the incomplete label of the **Subject Parcel**. Up until the time Inspector Wicks removed the Subject Parcel from the mail-stream on February 25, 2021, the **Subject Parcel** was not in the possession of law enforcement.

85035.” A review of available USPS, law enforcement, and open source databases determined 5955 Goodfellow Boulevard Apartment B St. Louis, Missouri 63147 was a valid mailing address, and the name “Tia Cole” associated to the same address. A review of available USPS, law enforcement, and open source databases determined 3535 West Tierra Buena Lane Phoenix, Arizona was an address for a large apartment complex. Due to no sender name or apartment number, I was unable to associate anyone as the sender. Based on my training and experience, I know narcotics traffickers have utilized fictitious sender addresses and refused to put their name on the parcels to attempt to avoid detection from law enforcement.

11. On February 25, 2021, I conducted a review of historical USPIS records and located nine (9) previous Priority Mail Express Parcels sent from Phoenix, Arizona or Glendale, Arizona addressed to 5955 Goodfellow Boulevard, Apartment B, St. Louis, Missouri 63147 since October of 2020. One of the parcels that was previously profiled which was mailed on December 15, 2020 from Glendale, Arizona was addressed to Harold McCray (Priority Mail Express #EJ253713600US). Using USPS, law enforcement, and open source databases, I was unable to associate “Harold McCray” to that address. In fact, I was unable to associate the name “Harold McCray” to anywhere in St. Louis, Missouri. Based on my training and experience, I know narcotics traffickers have utilized different addressees when sending serialized packages over a period time to attempt to avoid detection from law enforcement.

12. On February 25, 2021, I reviewed the criminal history of Tia Cole. Tia Cole’s criminal history included an arrest for the following offenses: Assault 3rd (November 13, 1980), Distribution/Delivery/Manufacture of a Controlled Substance (March 30, 1993) and Unlawful Use of a Weapon (August 14, 2004).

13. On February 25, 2021, I contacted Detective David Wilson, K-9 Handler employed by the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department. Detective Wilson responded to USPIS offices in St. Louis, Missouri and was accompanied by his narcotic-trained canine, “Noco.” The **Subject Parcel** was placed in an area not known to have been previously contaminated by a narcotic odor. Detective Wilson had Noco search this area. Upon arriving at the **Subject Parcel**, Detective Wilson advised that Noco reacted in a positive manner, which I observed, indicating the presence of a narcotic odor.

14. The **Subject Parcel** is a Medium Flat Rate Box with USPS Priority Mail Express label **EJ 344 654 407 US**. The **Subject Parcel** measures approximately twelve (12) inches by fourteen (14) inches, by three and one half (3.5) inches, and weighs approximately two (2) pounds, fifteen (15) ounces. The **Subject Parcel** was taped along all the seams except one which is the manufactured glued seam. Based on my training and experience, as well as the training and experience of other members of the USPIS Saint Louis CI2 Team, I know that the size and weight of the **Subject Parcel**, coupled with other indicators (i.e. previous profiled labels to the recipient address; addressed person to person; no sender name; sender address is an apartment complex with no apartment number listed; addressed from a known source narcotics area;

taped along most seams and a positive reaction by a narcotic trained canine), are indicative of other packages which have been found in the past to contain narcotic substances, or monies which are the proceeds/payments of narcotic trafficking. Consequently, I believe the parcel contains contraband and/or evidence in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 846, and Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1952, 1956, and 1957.

15. The **Subject Parcel** is currently in the custody of Task Force Officer Nicholas J. Masterson in the Eastern District of Missouri. Attached to this affidavit is a photograph of the mailing label for the **Subject Parcel** and a copy of the qualifications for canine "Noco."

16. Because this investigation is ongoing and its success would be jeopardized if the contents of this affidavit were made public, Inspectors request that this affidavit be sealed until further order of the Court.

I state under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.



NICHOLAS J. MASTERSON
USPIS Task Force Officer

Sworn to, attested to, and affirmed before me via reliable electronic means pursuant to Federal Rules of Criminal Procedure 4.1 and 41 this 26th day of February, 2021.

/s/ David D. Noce

DAVID D. NOCE
United States Magistrate Judge
Eastern District of Missouri

ES
CE

PRIORITY MAIL

1007 85147 \$55.20 R23055100579-20



PRIORITY MAIL EXPRESS



EU 344 654 407 US

CUSTOMER USE ONLY

FROM: please print PHONE: 1

3535 W. Tienna
PMAZ BERNAL LN
85035

DELIVERY OPTIONS (Customer Use Only)

- ☐ **SIGNATURE REQUIRED** Note: The mailer must check the "Signature Required" box if the mailer: 1) Requires the addressee's signature; OR 2) Purchases additional insurance; OR 3) Purchases COD service; OR 4) Purchases Return Receipt service. If the box is not checked, the Postal Service will leave the item in the addressee's mail receptacle in other secure location without attempting to obtain the addressee's signature on delivery.
- Delivery Options**
- ☐ No Saturday Delivery (delivered next business day)
- ☐ Sunday/Holiday Delivery Required (additional fee, where available)
- ☐ 10:00 AM Delivery Required (additional fee, where available)
- *Refer to USPS.com or local Post Office for availability.

TO: please print PHONE: 1

Tia Cole
5955 Goodfellow
BLVD Apt B NO
63147 St. Louis MO

ZIP+4 ADDRESS

- Print or USPS Tracking, visit USPS.com or call 800-323-1811.
- \$100.00 insurance included.

PEEL FROM THIS CORNER

PAYMENT BY ACCOUNT (if applicable)

USPS Corporate Acct. No. Federal Agency Acct. No. or Postal Service™ Acct. No.

ORDER (POSTAL SERVICE USE ONLY)

<input type="checkbox"/> 1 Day	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 Day	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> WFO
PS ZIP Code	Scheduled Delivery Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Postage	
Date Received (MM/DD/YYYY)	Scheduled Delivery Time <input type="checkbox"/> 10:00 AM <input type="checkbox"/> 5:00 PM <input type="checkbox"/> 12:00 PM	Insurance Fee	COD Fee
Time Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	10:00 AM Delivery Fee	Return Receipt Fee	Use Restriction Transcription Fee
Special Handling Package	Expedited Premium Fee	Total Package & Fees	
Weight <input type="checkbox"/> Flat Rate	Accession Expense Value		

DELIVERY (POSTAL SERVICE USE ONLY)

Delivery Attempt (MM/DD/YYYY)	Time <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	Employee Signature
Delivery Attempt (MM/DD/YYYY)	Time <input type="checkbox"/> AM <input type="checkbox"/> PM	Employee Signature

LABEL 11-01, MARCH 2019 PSN 7500-02-000-9000

VISIT US AT USPS
ORDER FREE SUPPLIES

METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT – CITY OF ST. LOUIS

Intra-Department Report and Correspondence Sheet

Date: December 2nd, 2020
To: Postal Inspector's Saint Louis Field Office
From: Detective David E. Wilson, DSN 7893/442
Subject: Canine Noco Qualifications Information
Copies:

The following information is in regards to canine Noco, a passive alert, single purpose narcotics detection dog;

Name: Noco
Age: 3 years old
Breed: Black Labrador Retriever.

Noco graduated from the Saint Louis Metropolitan Police Department Canine School on February 27th 2020 with his handler, Detective David E. Wilson.

Noco is trained to detect the following narcotics; Marijuana, Heroin, Black tar heroin, Crack Cocaine, Cocaine, Methamphetamine, MDMA (ecstasy) and Psilocybin ("mushrooms").

Noco and I train at least 2 times a month and we are certified with the American Mantrailing, Police & Work Dog Association (AMPWDA).

I have been a certified canine handler for one year.

It should be noted, Noco, has been certified with a previous handler with the North County Co-Operation Police Department and has had excellent results with them prior to them disbanding their Canine Unit.

Respectfully submitted;

Detective David E. Wilson, DSN 7893/442